MODERN
RELIGIOUS PROBLEMS

SIN AND ITS
FORGIVENESS

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WILLIAM DEWITT HYDE

Central BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

KANSAS CITY, KANSAS

By William DeWitt Hyde

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SIN AND ITS FORGIVENESS

BY

WILLIAM DEWITT HYDE

PRESIDENT OF BOWDOIN COLLEGE

Forgive us our sins; *for we ourselves also forgive* every one that is indebted to us. — *Luke* xi, 4.

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PREFACE

In his inmost heart every man seeks good and loves God. But God is great, and man is small; good is complex, while passion is simple and insistent. Hence all men forsake the good, and disobey God. This, in the concept form of philosophy, is the truth contained in the historical-pictorial representation that Adam was created holy, and subsequently fell.

External quest of goods less than the best is easily forgivable: internal habits of hugging self and pushing God and the good away, though harder to eradicate, are still forgivable.

Only the confirmed perversity that hates and despises God's goodness when brought near in winning personal terms is unforgivable.

Punishment is the defense of social good

51351

against the perversity of the individual, and a beneficent revelation to him of the evil of his selfishness.

Forgiveness, entirely consistent with punishment, is the welcoming of the perverse person back to the God from whom he strayed, and the true good he craves.

Since sin hurts sinner, society, and God, he who forgives must share the suffering sin brings; and therefore forgiveness must ever take the form of sacrifice, whose crowning symbol is the cross of Christ.

To be complete forgiveness must be incarnate; manifested by man to man. On the other hand, whoever forgives his fellow men their trespasses can have for the asking the divine forgiveness for his own shortcomings.

The power to bind and loose, to grant a forgiveness or pass a condemnation that is ratified in heaven, inheres not in any special order or office, but in every Chris-

tian man and in every group of Christian men who have the spiritual insight forgiving love imparts.

Such in briefest outline is the doctrine of this little book. It is latent in Plato's dialogues, and in the pleadings of the Hebrew Prophets with wayward Israel; is clearly taught in Jesus' parables, and is embodied in his life. It is taken for granted in the best modern literature, and shines in the lives of Christian men and women. Yet, while generally accepted in fragmentary form, these truths have never been gathered into a systematic statement.

The fact that, in this year of our Lord 1909, a graduate fresh from one of our most famous seminaries could present as the teaching of his professors, and get accepted as satisfactory by a metropolitan presbytery, the statement that "Sin is that which God has permitted for the manifestation of his own glory," is sufficient indication of the

need of a coherent doctrine of Sin and its Forgiveness; true to the insight of Jesus and the spiritual seers, and faithful to the facts of Christian experience.

WILLIAM DEWITT HYDE.

BOWDOIN COLLEGE, BRUNSWICK, MAINE,
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SIN AND ITS FORGIVENESS

I

INTRODUCTION

WHILE this book is one of a series, of which other writers will contribute the other parts, it is impossible to present even this small section without a brief outline of the whole. For one can no more treat one section of a system of thought without involving others, than Shylock could cut his pound of flesh and draw no drop of blood.

The struggle for existence through which animal and man have been evolved, hard and cruel as it appears to the onlooker, is without malice or intended evil. Each individual is simply intent on self-preservation, oblivious of the cost to others.

Late in human evolution comes law,

which sets limits to competition; and out of law is born a sense of obligation to count the cost of selfish good in social terms, and to condemn as bad those forms of selfish good which cost society too much.

Law is a negative and imperfect witness to an order of human society in which the good of all ought to be the object of the will of each. Yet to the individual it presents that order as something alien and hostile, enforced by penalties. Obedience to such an externally conceived law is slavish. The doer of the law becomes puffed up with a Pharisaic self-righteousness, devoid of love; and the breaker of the law is driven into hopeless rebellion, alienation, and hard-heartedness.

Next comes the prophet, who tells us that the law is not alien to us but friendly, that it is the expression of the will of the Eternal Love, seeking our common good, and that we are capable of entering into that

love which law imperfectly expresses, and finding our individual good in serving the common good of all. The acceptance of this message lifts man out of bondage into freedom. But what becomes of those who do not accept it?

Finally, Jesus comes with a gospel even for them. He tells us that our Heavenly Father seeks the good of all his children impartially: the good of those who do evil, as well as the good of those who do good. To be sure, so long as they do evil, the best thing for them is reproof and punishment. Toward those who persist in unrepented evil, reproof and punishment, therefore, are the form love takes. But they are inflicted in kindness; and the instant the sinner repents of his sin, the necessity for further punishment is removed, the barrier which kept love from finding expression in entire approval is broken down, and love then goes forth unchecked and unqualified. This go-

ing out of the Father's love, through the opening made by penitence, to welcome the child to a love which was always there, even during the period of sinfulness, waiting only for the breaking down of the barrier that kept it out,— this is forgiveness. Such forgiveness is eternal in the heart of the Father; it became historic in the person of Jesus Christ; and it is the indispensable and infallible mark of the presence of the spirit of Christ in the hearts of his followers.

The Christian man, then, is the agent upon earth, and in human society, of the Father's universal love. In him, as in the Father, and in Christ, this love will take whatever form the condition of the person who is its object makes appropriate: reproof and punishment so long as he persists in injuring society, and wronging his fellows; full and free forgiveness the instant he repents. Indeed, these two expressions

may exist side by side: punishment by civil penalties and social condemnation, so long as they are necessary for society's protection; and personal kindness and sympathy, even while the penitent offender is suffering the penalties that society's adequate protection, by way of warning to others, may require. In home and school and college, in society and business and the state, these two outwardly inconsistent, but inwardly harmonious, attitudes toward the penitent offender must often be maintained together. Otherwise the hard-hearted onlooker would confound the forgiveness he cannot understand with weak indulgence and moral indifference; which, to his undeveloped mind, are the only alternatives to severe and merciless punishment. It is his inability to see that these two attitudes, the external enforcement of efficacious penalty and the internal sentiment of sympathetic forgiveness, may dwell in the same heart,

and express themselves in the same life, which makes Tolstoy's teaching of non-resistance to evil such an unpractical distortion of that half of Jesus' Gospel which he so clearly grasped. Resistance to sin, and to the sinner so long as he clings to his sin; resistance to his sin and to himself, as the representative of it in the public eye, even after he has repented, so long as practical public policy renders such resistance expedient, may exist in perfect harmony with that entire devotion to the offender's good, both before and after penitence, which is the eternal attitude of the Father, the historic attitude of Christ, and the true inner attitude of every man who has the spirit of Christ and of the Father in his heart.

If this is the mark of the Christian man, then the church is simply the community of those who have this spirit. To serve society; to rebuke the sins which hurt society and our fellow men, and, through hurting

them, offend God; to love all men, even those who do wrong; to live the better life of love in the complex relations and close contacts of practical affairs; to keep these spiritual distinctions clear, and the impulse of love warm, and the readiness to forgive, even at high personal cost, alert, — these are the great functions for which the church, the community of those who have the loving and forgiving spirit, exists.

The Bible, the clergy, the sacraments, the services of public worship, the privilege of private prayer, the work of mission and settlement, the Sunday school, the brotherhood, the allied societies and agencies, are all sacred, holy, divinely ordained, just in so far as they promote, purify, express, and propagate this spirit of love: love that hates and punishes the sin that hurts men and mars the happiness of God's family on earth, and at the same time forgives, restores, and saves every offender as soon

as he is sorry for his sin, and ready to renounce it for the better life of service and good-will.

Such, in briefest outline, is the system of theology of which this section on Sin and its Forgiveness is a small but vital part. Seen in this its setting, sin is simply lack of love, inflicting cruel wrong on suffering brothers and sisters in the great household of God. Punishment is a coarse, crude device for society's protection and the offender's good, which love is compelled to inflict as long as the offender needs it for his education, or society needs it for its protection, or onlookers need it for their warning. Forgiveness is love overflowing to heal the wounds inflicted on others, and the worse injury done to his own soul by the sinner's cruel selfishness; welcoming the sinner into the favor of God, the fellowship of Christ, and the society of the loving, in spite of the offenses which he has

committed. Therefore forgiveness is personal, sacrificial, and requires as its bearer a human heart, living close enough to the offender to make him feel the shame of his sin in clear contrast to the righteousness that is there by his side, and to win and welcome him to the life of love and service. It is a layman's task; yet one in which the minister may both point and lead the way, if he has the humble, serviceable, loving spirit, which is the spirit of Christ. It is hard, costly, sacrificial; but nothing easier, cheaper, less personal, vital, social, can carry through to its triumphant conclusion Christ's chosen task, — the salvation of men and the redemption of the world.

Without clear conviction of sin, and habitual exercise of forgiveness, no theology is worth the words in which it is expressed. The old theology had both, but in an abstract, transcendental fashion, from which all reality and vitality have faded

out and oozed away. The new theology has not yet acquired them; and until it does, it will remain vague, sentimental, inchoate, inefficient: a halfway station on the road to soulless secularity. No man who is not daily aware of his own shortcomings, and profoundly penitent for the unprofitableness of his service, no man who does not find occasion for constant forgiveness of others every day of his life, has learned so much as the first rudiments of Christ's Gospel, and all theologies, old or new, will remain to him sealed books.

Christianity without a keen sense of sin is like the benevolent old lady who urged on all her friends a favorite remedy, but could never recall what ailment it was warranted to cure. Yet a keen sense of sin comes only from a clear vision of God. Folly we may know without knowing God: for that is a gouge in the smooth surface of our self-complacency. Vice we may

know without knowing God; for that is stamped with popular disapproval. Crime we may know without knowing God; for that is punished by law. But sin we cannot know without knowing God; for sin is missing the mark of God's perfect love.

Folly is always sin; for God's love includes our good. Vice is almost always sin; for God's love excludes most of the things public opinion disapproves. Crime is usually sin; for God's love forbids most acts which society condemns. Yet sin, while it includes all these, is more than they. By so much as "the love of God is broader than the measure of man's mind," by so much as it is deeper than popular notions of good and bad form, by so much as it is higher than any Jewish or Gentile statute-book, by so much does sin exceed in breadth and depth and height, our vices and our crimes.

Sin, therefore, is not a rare exception,

confined to desperate moments of depraved men and fallen women. Sin is the almost constant experience of us all; out of which occasionally we rise, when some clear duty, some noble impulse, some generous affection lifts us for the moment into oneness with the love of God. To measure our acts, our thoughts, our desires, by the perfect love of God; counting good only what coincides with the best that God has shown us of himself in Christ, in Christian men and women, and in our own consciences; counting all that falls short of that, sin, — this is the only way to know God above us, sin within us, and ourselves the battle-ground between the two.

"No, when the fight begins within himself,
A man 's worth something. God stoops o'er his head,
Satan looks up between his feet, — both tug —
He 's left, himself, i' the middle; the soul awakes
And grows. Prolong that battle through this life!
Never leave growing till the life to come."

When man or church or generation loses the sense of sin, it is a sure sign of the loss of the vision of God. One might as well talk of shadow without light, divorce without marriage, treason without the state, as of sin without God. It is by throwing our lives upon the background of God's perfect love, that we get that contrast between divine ideal and human shortcoming which is the sense of sin.

Is, then, the life of the Christian man, the man who throws his actual life on to this ideal background, weighed down by this perpetual burden of guilt and condemnation? No. That is only one of two elements of Christian experience. The other is forgiveness.

The same love of God which condemns us for falling short of its high standard, the same love in the light of which we feel our own shortcoming, and condemn ourselves, also forgives, and restores us to favor and

fellowship. How do we know this? What is the ground of our assurance?

Our only knowledge of the love of God is the expression of it we see in Christ, in other men, and in our inner experience. Jesus prayed, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." All Christian men, so far as they share Christ's spirit, forgive those who do them wrong. We do it ourselves. In so far as we have the spirit of Christ, we never wish harm or evil to another, who has wronged us, or has wronged our friends, or wronged the world. We may oppose his error, and rebuke his sin. We may punish him for society's protection, and his own good. But we harbor no grudge against him. We welcome the first sign of repentance to assure him of our continued good-will. We try to bring others to forgive him and befriend him, as soon as he is sorry for the wrong he has done. Even before he has repented, even

while we are opposing his evil deeds, and suffering the wrong he does to us, or to those dear to us, we pity the blindness which makes such meanness possible for him; we are watching for the opportunity to welcome him back to the better way. This, I say, is our own experience, the experience of every one of us in so far as we share the spirit of Christ; in so far, that is, as we are in a position to understand the heart and will of God. For it is only through his revelation in Christ and other good men, reproduced as a genuine experience in ourselves, that we can know how God thinks and wills and feels in any situation.

Now we have simply to turn this experience in upon ourselves, to get the assurance of the forgiveness of God, of Christ, and of all Christian men who know us, for our own sins. Neither we, nor the Christian men we know, nor Christ, nor the God whom this Christian experience reveals,

would hesitate for a moment to forgive and restore to favor any man who had done the mean and evil things we have done, and who was sorry for them as we are sorry; penitent as we are penitent. If we, so far as we share the spirit of Christ, which is the spirit of God, — if we would forgive another in precisely our state of confessed and repented sin, then we have proof positive, assurance absolute, that God, and Christ, and all Christian men so far as they know the facts, forgive us our sins. Christ and the Father are surely not harder upon us than we, sharing their spirit, are upon those who do us wrong, or work evil in the world. We are just as sure of God's forgiveness of us as we are of the presence of the forgiving spirit in our own hearts and lives: no more, no less.

If this seems a strange and roundabout way of getting at the assurance of divine forgiveness, it is at any rate Jesus' way.

That is the ground he put it on. "If ye forgive men their trespasses, your Heavenly Father will also forgive you: But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Heavenly Father forgive your trespasses." In the last analysis it rests entirely with us whether or not we shall have the assurance of forgiveness. Whoever has the forgiving spirit, knows that God forgives him his trespasses. Whoever has not the forgiving spirit, lacks the only real experience on which he could base belief that his own sins are forgiven. God, like Christ and every true Christian man, stands ever ready to forgive. He would be below Christ, below the best men we know, below our own best experience; He would be less than perfect love, if He did not. God is as good as the best we see in Christ and in other men, and experience in ourselves. Christ forgave until seventy times seven. Therefore we know that God forgives us.

Having made this appeal to Christian experience as the ultimate source and final authority on Sin and its Forgiveness, the reader will probably ask himself, and want to ask the writer, whether this sense of omnipresent sin and perpetual forgiveness is actually present as a clear and distinct element in the consciousness of the normal Christian man to-day. Do you carry Sin and its Forgiveness as conscious experiences every day and hour of your life? Or have you borrowed some traditional phraseology from the Bible, the Fathers, and the Prayer Book, which you are trying to palm off on the modern world under the name of facts of Christian experience? These are fair questions. In fact, the first man I talked with about the matter, a minister of the most progressive type of "New Theology," put them to me with the implication that the answer was bound to be "No" to the first question, and "Yes" to the second.

The answer is neither an unqualified "Yes," nor an unqualified "No," but something between the two. If asked whether these elements rise to explicit consciousness in their naked elemental form, we should have to answer, "No." We are not explicitly conscious of sinning and of being forgiven every day and hour of our lives. But then we are not explicitly conscious of the presence of oxygen and hydrogen every day of our lives, though I hope we can say truly that we never rise in the morning without their free and abundant recognition and application. We recognize and apply them, however, not as elements, but in the familiar combination called water.

In a similar way the two experiences, Sin and its Forgiveness, become combined in the experience of the normal Christian man. He is always aware that he falls far short of that constant kindliness, that sensitive sympathy, that strenuous rectitude, that

disinterested benevolence, which the love of God would have his life express. On the other hand, he is equally confident that this same love does not cast him off or condemn him, but welcomes him to continued fellowship and service. Thus Sin and its Forgiveness unite in a single and constant experience, of serene humility or modest cheerfulness.

II

EXTERNAL SINS

INSIGHT into sin, as missing the mark of God's love, reveals at once how mean and how pardonable it is. This twofold quality of sin we may indicate by the single word pitifulness. In so far as we take God's view of sin, we loathe the act and love the man who does it. To be sure we find that distinction hard to maintain in practice. God and our mothers are the only persons who altogether succeed. But the difficulty of a spiritual attitude is no sign that it is not divine and right and true. On the contrary, vengeance, or the promiscuous condemnation of deed and man, comes so easy to us that we suspect God's attitude, man's ideal, — the truth of the matter, in other words, — must be something far higher and harder.

That is precisely what a careful analysis of sin shows. Sin is always the sacrifice of a greater good for the sake of a lesser good. It is the wanton sacrifice of the greater good that makes it mean. It is the little good sought and gained that makes it forgivable. It is the union of these two factors in every act of sin which constitutes its pitifulness.

Intemperance reveals most clearly this pitiful contrast of great good lost and petty good pursued. The titillation of the palate, the jolly comradeship, the momentary nervous excitation, the temporary inhibition of unwelcome considerations,—all these are good; and when we realize how good they are, and how the abnormal appetite, the depleted system, the weary body, the worried mind, the lonely heart, craved them, we pity, we sympathize, we almost half approve.

But when we call to mind the disease of

body, the hardening of heart, the weakening of will, the waste of money, the loss of work, the wretchedness of wife and children, the burden to the public, the great avenues of love and service perverted and destroyed, as the price of habitual excess in drink, then we abhor an act that, however many petty pleasures it may show to its temporary credit, has these vast and lasting evils charged upon the debit side. Then, if we are Christian, we pity the man: we long to put our lives close to his; to share with him the evils he has brought upon himself; to give him what we may out of our unsquandered stores of physical goods; to remove from him the sources of temptation; to fight for him against those who profit by his degradation: in a word, to make his sad condition ours, with all its disabilities; and to make our condition his, with all its resources of helpfulness and happiness. This willing acceptance of and identi-

fication with his pitiful condition; this struggle with him, and against his enemies, to lift him and keep him up,—this active and suffering love is forgiveness.

It is the opposite and yet the counterpart of sin. The sinner seeks a little good, at cost of widespread, lasting loss to self, others, or both. He who forgives, if his forgiveness is genuine, deliberately assumes all the sinner's losses as his own; suffers with him and for him; brings the enmity of his enemies down on his own head; and thus, by loss freely assumed, secures the sinner's recovery and restoration.

This, of course, implies close contact. It is hardly to be accomplished by sitting in a pew of the same church once a week, even if by any chance the drunkard should happen to be there. It is not accomplished by voting once a year for prohibition, local, state, or federal. It is the sharing of life and the conditions of life; it is the giving of love

and the labor of love. Something may be done through contributions, institutions, and the employment of other workers; and those who can get no nearer, may well give themselves in this indirect, substitutionary way. But ultimately forgiveness must be brought by a person to a person, through mutual sympathy; in which he who forgives takes on all the sinner's disabilities, and he who has sinned is offered all the resources, the influence, and the aid, of him who comes to save.

Licentiousness likewise is pitiful from this same double aspect. On the one hand, it is the expression of an instinct implanted in the race as the condition of its perpetuation, and which nature never permits, for more than a single generation, to be below its normal strength. Any lack or defect of it, nature punishes with its remorseless penalty of extinction. Those in whom it is

intense are nature's favorites; and with intensity are apt to go a host of attractive qualities: physical beauty, genial nature, generous impulse, the dash of recklessness, the charm of freedom from self-consciousness. All of us who have been brought in contact with men and women who have sinned in this direction, if we are honest, must admit that we have seen a depth of devotion, a warmth of affection, a heroism of loyalty, an abandon of unselfishness, in sinners of this type, which we too often miss among the prim proprieties of pious respectability. Sin of this kind is in a sense natural; a great many fall into it through ignorance, or temporary blindness; many more are led into it through evil example, or economic constraint. It is pathetically pitiful; and if the individual and racial history could be known, we should all be more ready to pity than to blame.

Yet it is selfish, cruel, murderous. For

a passing gratification of passion it will ruin a whole life's happiness, and a household's peace. It dooms to lifelong degradation, disease, wretchedness, and early death, a whole class of wretched women in every city of the world. It spreads loathsome disease, bitter jealousy, blasting hatred, through innocent hearts and otherwise happy homes. Nowhere does the pursuit of passing pleasure bring such a widespread harvest of enduring pain and shame.

What, then, is the true attitude of the Christian man toward persons guilty of this form of sin? How does God in his love regard them?

We should see clearly what a mean and cruel thing it is: how it breaks down, for momentary selfish gratification, the sacred institution of the family, built up through centuries of struggle and self-control. We should abhor it, and show the men and women who are guilty of it that we abhor it.

We should contrive to get close enough to them, personally if we can, institutionally through our support and gifts, if that second best is all our circumstance or temperament permits, to make them feel our abhorrence of the mean and selfish cruelty of it. At the same time, we should make them feel that we understand the weakness that led them to fall into it; the strength of passion that dragged them down; and above all that we stand with them, and will toil and suffer for them, in their effort to rise above it, and live hereafter the clean, kind life. We should be the friend of the corrupt man and the fallen woman; we should try to make other people their friends. We should go down and share with them the condemnation society passes upon them; and we should lift them up to share whatever respectability and social favor we enjoy. Nothing less personal, nothing less vital; nothing less costly, nothing less apparently impossible, will fill the

measure of the love God would pour out through our lives to them. On no other terms can we claim to be followers and friends of Him who said, and revealed God's love in saying, "Neither do I condemn thee; go and sin no more."

Lying, too, has the double aspect common to all sin. In its meaner forms it is a device for shirking responsibility, escaping criticism, defrauding customer or creditor, and springs from the innocent instinct of social self-preservation. In its higher forms, as used by cultivated people, it is a generous desire to be more entertaining than a plain statement of the case will warrant: to deck out a situation in colors contributed by the narrator's "happy artistry." Many of the most charming women in the world, some of the world's most famous men, especially those of the military and sportsman types, are half-unconsciously addicted to lying as

the most natural way of making themselves and their experiences interesting.

On the other hand, lying of all kinds tends to break down confidence between man and man; and by crying "wolf" when there is no wolf, to invite disaster when the real wolf appears. The liar refuses to dwell in the same world of mutual understanding with his fellows; he shuts them out of his little life, and in so doing shuts himself out of theirs. People learn to distrust him, and in distrusting him to distrust human nature. Lying is intellectual highway robbery; and its penalty is mental solitary confinement.

How shall we treat the liar? What would God's love have us do to him? We should live close enough to him to suffer the disappointments and losses that result from the misinformation he gives us; we should let him see and feel that we detest it; and at the same time, we should show him that

we love him; that we love truth; and that we want to bring him and the truth together. Only by this contagion from one who loves the truth and loves the liar, will truth pass effectively and victoriously into the liar's heart, and make him over into a true man. Preachers may denounce lying, and professors may praise truth; but it is the truthful man or woman, living in abhorrence of lies side by side with the liar, who does the actual work of forgiving and saving the liar, and winning him to truth.

Stealing has the same two aspects that are the common marks of sin. A man wants something which belongs to another. He wants it very badly. He is poor, and the man who has it is so rich that he would never miss it. Or the chance to steal is so general and indirect that the man from whom he steals will not even know that

anything has been taken from him. This is the case in the more prevalent forms of stealing to-day; the stealing that is carried on by respectable citizens and honored church members in every branch of industry, commerce, and politics. I want to support my family a little better, or give my son a more expensive education, or maintain my daughter in a wealthy social circle. I cannot do these things if I confine myself to producing goods or rendering services which I offer to the world at their current market value. But I can do these things very easily if I organize a corporation and take, as unfortunately the laws of certain states allow me to take, a large block of the stock for comparatively worthless property or insignificant services. I can do these things if, as director of a railroad, I use my power as the representative of the stockholders and the trustee of the public to get portions of the road built by a con-

struction company in which I have an interest; and then, as a member of the construction company, sell to the railroad in which I am a director the constructed road at several thousand dollars a mile more than its construction cost. I can do these things for my wife and children if, holding a majority of stock in a corporation, I sell it to parties who will use the controlling interest thus acquired, to make the stock of the minority stockholders comparatively worthless. I can do these things if, as owner of a controlling interest, I use the power it gives me to vote exorbitant salaries to myself and my friends, or to withhold dividends and pile up a surplus until the poorer stockholders are compelled to sell for less than it would be worth if the business were fairly managed.

I can do these things if I buy things which I am unable to pay for; if I use my political influence and position to secure fran-

chises, favors, exemptions, which will allow me to make profit out of the public loss. These and countless similar forms of stealing all have at their core the innocent and laudable desire to make money, gain power, secure position for myself, my family, and my friends. All that is praiseworthy. The presence of this ambition is an indication of many personal, domestic, and social virtues. We cannot withhold a certain admiration and affection from thieves of this type, whom we meet in business, in society, at the club, and even at church.

On the other hand, when we realize how ruthlessly they strip the hard-working man of the savings of a lifetime; how they impoverish the widow and orphan; how every honest workingman in the community has to work harder and live poorer to make up for his share of the general loss that corresponds to their dishonest gains, we despise the methods by which these men have

gained their wealth. What is the Christian attitude toward these men? How does God in his love regard them?

We ought to continue to be their friends. We ought to get and keep as close to them as we can. But at the same time we ought to make them feel by our example, by our expression, whenever a clear case comes to our common attention, what a mean and cruel thing this polite stealing really is. The right attitude is well illustrated by the act of a Wall Street friend of mine who was offered a price considerably above the market value for a block of stock, in which he was the largest owner. He asked the man who made the offer what he wanted it for, and what he proposed to do for the other stockholders. To these questions the reply was, "Oh, we only want control." Straight came the answer, — an answer which, coming from a man influential in a score of the great corporations of the coun-

try, was worth ten thousand sermons on abstract honesty from the pulpit or the professor's chair, — "You can't get it from me. If you make an offer to all the stockholders at the price you named, or even lower, I might sell, and I might advise the stockholders to sell; but I won't do this. So many of the small stockholders are in this road because they believe in me, that I cannot make any private deal with you. My stock is for sale, but my stockholders are not."

To go into business and there become a power, and then to use that power, quietly, unostentatiously, but firmly and effectively, to rebuke the very men with whom you live on friendly terms, and thus lift their standards by your own financial loss, — that is what the forgiveness of sins means in a modern business man. That is first-hand salvation. We who are not able to do that, as most of us are not, can find a second best form

of the same service, in supporting churches and schools, journals and clubs, writers and speakers who, in friendliness and fairness, yet with clearness and incisiveness, proclaim the beauty of honesty and the shame of modern stealing. The actual condemnation of sin, and forgiveness of the sinner, is primarily a layman's affair: for in such a sin as modern stealing, he is the only person who lives close enough to the real life of the thieves to make them at the same time value his good opinion, and wince under his rebuke. In this fundamental sin of modern business, a preacher and teacher like myself must confess that he is at one remove from reality, and is merely a voice crying in the distance. Still, those of us who are outside of actual business, by our clear-cut distinctions, by our indignation against fraud, by our warm admiration of business honor, can do something to support and strengthen those who are in the thick of the fight.

That is one of the neglected functions of the modern church.

Murder is a widely prevalent form of sin to-day. In saying this, I do not refer to the rapidly increasing number of cases of violence and bloodshed. Alarming as that is, it is but an insignificant fraction of the total murder that goes on in our modern Christian civilization. As Professor Ross has pointed out in his "Sin and Society," the modern assassin "wears immaculate linen, carries a silk hat and a lighted cigar, sins with a calm countenance and a serene soul, leagues or months from the evil he causes. Upon his gentlemanly presence the eventual blood and tears do not intrude themselves. This is why good, kindly men let the wheels of commerce and of industry redden and redden, rather than pare or lose their dividends. This is why our railroads yearly injure one employee in twenty-six,

and we look in vain for that promised 'day of the Lord' that 'will make a man more precious than fine gold.' Our iniquity is wireless, and we know not whose withers are wrung by it. The purveyor of spurious life-preservers need not be a Cain. The owner of rotten tenement houses, whose 'pull' enables him to ignore the orders of the health department, foredooms babies, it is true, but for all that he is no Herod. The mob lynches the red-handed slayer, when it ought to keep a gallows Haman-high for the venal mine-inspector, the seller of infected milk, the maintainer of a fire-trap theatre."

The murderers we meet in every walk of life to-day, members of every club or church we join, present in evening dress at almost every dinner or party, like the thieves previously considered, are simply the men who want big dividends with which to maintain their families in luxury, and do

not inquire too curiously how many human lives they needlessly shorten to increase those dividends, or how many human heads they cut off with their coupons.

Recent statistics of a year's accidents to workingmen in Allegheny County, in which Pittsburg is located, published in the "Nation," of March 18, 1909, show that 526 men were killed in that county by industrial accidents in the twelve months from July 1, 1906, to June 30, 1907. In addition 2000 were seriously injured, of whom 500 were so crippled as to be discharged from the hospitals permanent wrecks. While the speed and pressure of the work render a large number of these accidents unavoidable, in a group of cases investigated 35 per cent were attributable to the employers' negligence; in other words, the employers preferred to commit that amount of murder rather than pay the slight cost of life-saving precautions and devices.

In Bangor, Maine, a family moved into a tenement which had previously been occupied by a patient sick with tuberculosis. The landlord neither informed the incoming tenant of the fact, nor had the house disinfected. The child of the family died of tuberculosis in consequence. When asked why he did not have the house disinfected, the landlord excused himself on the ground that he could not afford the ten dollars, more or less, which it would cost. Murder for ten dollars is a depth of depravity to which most bandits would scorn to condescend.

The rookery landlord and the jerry-builder, the adulterator and the maker and vender of deleterious patent medicines, the quack doctor and charlatan "healer," the purveyor of polluted water and infected milk, the man who fails to fence dangerous machinery and provide safety couplers for his cars, the owners of unsanitary tenements

and fire-trap theatres, the men who overwork children, and employ women on conditions fatal to either health or character, — these murderers, numbered by hundreds, and whose victims are counted by tens of thousands, are the ones who do the wholesale human slaughter of to-day. There are a hundred times as many men guilty of murder through commercial complicity in the United States to-day as there were five hundred years ago, when the bow and arrow and the tomahawk were the weapons employed. In so far as preventable disease and calamity exist in our communities, we all are sharers in responsibility for the murders their permitted continuance entails.

What shall we do about it? What has God's love to say? We must call it by its plain hard name of murder every chance we get. We must make the men who are guilty feel themselves to be the murderers they are. We must make their prac-

tices so odious, that every decent man will be ashamed to have a hand in them.

At the same time, we must have charity for them. Their motive was not murder, but dividends; and so far forth they are no worse than the rest of us. By kindness to them, by close association with them, we must get near enough to them in appreciation of their good qualities, to make them feel our condemnation, by example and by word, of the murderous acts they often unwittingly commit. Vague, general condemnation from a distance, such for instance as I am just now writing, will make little or no impression on the real offenders. Few of them read religious books, or care much what is said in them. More of them attend church, and what is said in the pulpit sometimes makes a slight impression on them. But the real work of making them feel the condemnation of the murder they commit, must be done by busi-

ness men who live and work with them side by side; whose good opinion these murderers care for, and yet whose good opinion they cannot have so long as they persist in murder. There is an important function for the moral and religious teacher to perform in making the issue clear, and directing public attention; just as there is an important work for the general in battle who stands back of the firing line. But nothing short of close personal contact, where ideals meet, and practices clash; where the savior and the destroyer of life live together on the same street, in the same offices, in the same line of business, side by side, day after day, — nothing short of this can at once condemn the sin, forgive the sinner, protect the victims, and save society.

III

INTERNAL SINS

THE sins thus far considered, though like all sins rooted in the heart, have their immediate occasion and expression in external relations. They are raging conflagrations, wasting and consuming vast areas of human welfare. In addition to these obvious external sins there is a large group of internal sins: sins which smoulder and run in the dry, dead leaves, in the hard and hollow heart. Ultimately they break out in most unexpected places, and do widespread damage; but for a long time they lie concealed, unsuspected even by the very soul in whose secret recesses they lurk.

The worst of these smouldering sins is pride. It is the perversion of the wholesome instinct of self-respect. Often pride

is at the outset an assumed mask to hide sensitiveness and shyness: a rough husk developed to protect the delicate life within from too close contact with alien or hostile spirits. Its aim originally is the innocent one of shielding self; not the cruel one of wounding others. If we could trace back to its psychological genesis the pride in the haughty man or the heartless woman, we should find that it sprang from nothing worse than this childish impulse to shield one's self; and that only gradually had this impulse of self-shielding grown into its odious and hideous counterpart of ignoring, slighting, and hurting others.

When full-blown, however, pride is one of the most deadly sins. It is the very antithesis of that love which is God's will for us, and our own true good. Love looks kindly and sympathetically on all: sees others and ourselves in true proportions and relations; recognizes how small and

imperfect a part of the whole the individual, even at his best, must be; and gladly confesses that there is none good but one, that is, God. Pride on the contrary is puffed up; behaves itself unseemly, is easily provoked, thinketh all manner of evil, rejoiceth in other people's iniquity. The proud man will hurt another's feelings to save his own. The proud woman will make a score of people miserable to give herself by contrast the semblance of happiness. It is the denial, the drying up within one, of the very principle of love. In his cruel cutting of others off from himself, the proud man cuts himself off from God.

Then, too, pride is real or pretended satisfaction with what one has attained and now is; while life, and growth which is the law of life, depend on fixing the attention and aspiration, not on what we have done and are, but on what we aim and strive to be. Pride is as lifeless as it is loveless.

How, then, does God regard this sin? and how should the Christian treat a man or woman who is guilty of it? Instinctively we react against it, with a corresponding pride and contempt of our own. But that is not Christian; that is not Godlike; that is to surrender to it, and be overcome by it. Furthermore, to meet the proud man with a pride of our own, only drives him further into himself, making him more hard and hollow than ever. Not thus can this deep root of bitterness be extracted.

Unpleasant as the proud man's company is to one who has the spirit of humility; intolerable as the proud woman is to one who meets her with the self-forgetful modesty of love; still, the Christian man must bear with them patiently, and live with them on such terms of intimate friendliness as will make them feel their pride silently condemned by one whose good opinion they value, and will bring home to them in win-

some personal form the superiority of simple modesty and all-inclusive kindliness. This is the high price of salvation from this most odious and anti-social sin.

Censoriousness is a perversion of the healthy impulse to pass judgment on moral issues. Human conduct is the most intensely interesting topic of thought and conversation in the world. Nevertheless, censoriousness is a mean delight in putting and keeping other persons down in our estimation; and is closely akin to pride, which is a base delight in keeping ourselves in our own estimation exalted and puffed up. Censoriousness seizes on every fault and foible in another, magnifies it, dwells upon it, broods over it, until the whole heart becomes a festering mass, a running sore of venom and ill-will. It is the poisonous atmosphere out of which scandal is brought forth.

Nothing is more contrary to the sweet spirit of Christian charity than this sour and belittling sin of censoriousness. We feel the poisonous stench of it as soon as we come into its fetid atmosphere. We long to get out, into the fresh air of kindliness and sympathy. We are tempted in our own hearts to berate and denounce the littleness of soul which we so despise.

That, however, would be falling into censoriousness ourselves. That would be doing in ourselves the very thing we condemn in others. So subtly contagious are these internal forms of sin, that, unless we are very alert to apply the great spiritual disinfectant of charity, we catch them before we know it! No. That is not Christian; that is not the way to overcome the sin, and win the sinner back to a sweet charitableness.

If we would forgive him, and save him, we must listen to his wretched querulous-

ness, hear him run down persons bigger and better than himself, all the while watching our opportunity to throw in a word of appreciation or praise or extenuation for the poor victim of his censoriousness. Only by bringing a deeper, broader charity, which includes both him and the persons whom he censures, can we draw him out of his censoriousness into its glorious opposite. So costly is the price of forgiveness and regeneration for this most miserable sin! How few of us there are who are willing to go on paying this price, day after day, week after week, until slowly and surely the soul-poison is extracted, and the victory is won!

Laziness is a sin which has its roots in a wholesome and natural self-protection. In these days of overstrain, when so many men and women are recklessly consuming the physical capital they ought to hold as

a sacred trust for the benefit of future generations, the lazy man and woman, who live on their interest, and a low rate of interest at that, may be serving God and humanity more wisely, if not more meritoriously, than their more strenuous and straining neighbors.

Yet laziness, in spite of this far-fetched biological justification, when it involves the preference of privation for others, for our family, or even for ourselves, rather than the pain of effort, becomes a clear case of that loveless selfishness which is the common mark of sin. To let somebody go hungry, or ill-clothed, or uneducated, that I may take my luxurious ease, is to put the infinitesimal and trivial above the infinite and the essential. It is to put self before God.

No words are necessary to add to our instinctive contempt for the man who prefers to loaf rather than to provide for his

family; or the woman who is willing her husband should become a drudge at his business, in order that she may live a life of ostentatious indolence. Yet reproaches alone are not sufficient to rouse the lazy from their lethargy. We must bring our earnest lives into close contact with their frivolous and indolent ones; showing them at the same time that we care for them, and care for better things than they have learned to care for. To lift into earnestness a life that has never known anything better worth while than bridge-playing and automobiling, under-exercising and overfeeding, we must bring home to it forms of service which we thoroughly enjoy, and offer in friendliness to share with the soul that is empty and idle. That, however, we shall find hard. It is easier far to do a piece of work alone than to bother with the help of a lazy person. But we must do this harder thing; otherwise the con-

tagion of laziness has captured and conquered us.

Malice is the extreme antithesis of love, the farthest remove from God to which a soul can go short of the unforgivable sin. Malice takes a fiendish delight in bullying the weak, torturing the helpless, and inflicting pain on all whom it dares to hurt. In the family it crops out as the brutality of a husband to an intimidated wife, or a shrew's nagging of a long-suffering husband. In business it appears as a cut-throat competition, not for the sake of extra profits, but for the devilish satisfaction of crushing competitors, and driving the defenseless to the wall.

Yet if we could know the inner history of the malicious man; if we could trace his origin back through the abuse received in childhood, when in self-defense he acquired the attitude of antagonism; back to the

struggle for existence of our animal ancestors in the primeval jungle, we perhaps should pity the man who is malicious even more than we pity the victims who suffer from it.

Of course our instinctive reaction is one of intense hostility: the desire to smite the man who is wantonly striking others. But that would be simply catching from him the contagion of his own malice, and paying him back in his own coin. There is nothing Christian about that. The Christian, who comes to the malicious person in the love of God, will be kind to him, show him that he has sympathy for his victims, show him that he desires to be a true friend to him, yet cannot be the perfect friend he would be so long as the malicious person harbors in his breast and acts out in his life this odious trait which his would-be friend abhors. That is forgiveness; and, if anything can, will purge the man's heart of its malice.

IV

THE CROSS OF CHRIST

A SOUND theology is simply the facts of our personal life, as Plato would say, "writ large." We know God only through man. A revelation that is not an incarnation is no revelation at all, but blank mystery and magic. An attribute or act of God that cannot be translated into appreciable human terms can have no meaning for us. Hence, as human experience develops, the divine attributes have to be retranslated into terms of the deepening experience of the race. Startling as this sounds, the only alternative is to have a God who is symbolized by the outgrown experience of a bygone stage of human evolution. And this is perilously near to having no God at all; for the God of a transcended stage of human history is hardly worshipful.

There have been times when arbitrary punishment for wrong-doing was a familiar spectacle in courts of law; when personal intercession was a potent factor in securing remission of such penalty; when fear and favor alternated on the throne of human government. In Oriental communities this stage persists, and recent events in France indicate that this stage of the development of "justice" is not altogether transcended there.

Wherever Anglo-Saxon law and institutions have spread, however, right is no longer justified by might, or swayed by favor; it must justify itself by the good it serves; and to remit essential penalty by special favor is seen to be a grievous wrong. Consequently, the interpretation of the divine government in these arbitrary and capricious terms no longer appeals to the Anglo-Saxon and German conscience. Torments of hell make men rebel against what

in a civil government they would brand as tyranny; and offers of forgiveness on too easy terms make them suspicious of a discipline which, if it existed in their own communities, they would despise as sentimental. Hence, while the sinner may admit that he is a fool and a knave, and confess that he ought to rule his greed and thirst, yet when the only agencies brought to bear on him are the threats of punishment and the promises of pardon, he is likely to obey his own sweet will, in defiance alike of the warnings and of the consolations of religion. The religion of fear and favor, based on the Oriental and mediæval heaven and hell, has lost its moral grip on the Anglo-Saxon sinner of to-day.

There is one hold on such a sinner, one only. He is not blind; he is not all unkind. Through the carnal crust he sometimes sees the man he ought to be. Especially when his greed has plundered the poor; when his

lust has ruined the innocent; when his dissipation, his profligacy, has grieved those who love him and have made great sacrifices on his behalf, and brought down their gray hairs in sorrow to the grave, — then he is truly sorry; then he repents; then he resolves to be a better man. Perhaps of all men in the modern world, the college officer comes closest to the real motives which sway the hearts of men who have done wrong. Doctor Eliot declares that his experience at Harvard has taught him that the only way to save a bad young man is to bring to bear on him the influence of some one whom he loves, and make him face his evil deeds in terms of what they mean in sorrow to the loved one. We all know that if we cannot find some person for whom such a young man cares, and for whose sake he is willing to try to do better, neither threats nor entreaties are ever of avail. Consequence to others, — yes, to others who are

innocent, and whose sorrow is the free sacrifice of love, — this is the one thing that will get hold of a bad man's heart when all else fails.

The cross of Christ is the symbol of the consequence of sin, writ large. Where there is greed, there is privation; where there is corruption, there is oppression; where there is lust, there is anguish; where there is drunkenness, there is misery; where there is falsehood, there is distrust; where there is cruelty, there is suffering; where there is pride, there is despair; where there is ostentation, there is heartburning; where there is unkindness, there are tears; in a word, where there is sin, there is punishment; though the bearers of the heaviest punishment are more frequently the innocent victims than the guilty doers of the wrong. Christ, in coming into a world full of hypocrisy and avarice and pride and malice, had his life embittered, and finally was

brought to death, as the inevitable consequence of being a good man in an evil world. He loved the world, and, in trying to do it good, won its hate. In seeking to save it he laid down his life. Hence he stands as the great historic representative of suffering love seeking to save the world. He is to all who have sinned and gone astray what the sorrowing father and grieving mother are to their wayward boy, what the true friend who sticks to him through thick and thin is to the fellow who has fallen into bad habits and disgrace. Christ stands, therefore, as the revealer and interpreter of God in terms of the highest and holiest human experience we know — that of suffering love bearing the consequences of sin, and appealing to the sinner who has caused the sorrow, to be a better man.

The law of vicarious sacrifice is written into the constitution of the moral universe. Society is organic. If one does wrong,

others must suffer. For wrong is maladjustment; and the symptom of maladjustment is pain. The great demand of the hour is ethical insight; to point out in precise terms the meanness and cruelty and misery-producing power of specific sins. If the promoter of dishonest business schemes could see the privation in country homes, where the hard earnings of years of toil are swept away by the floods of water with which he has diluted the stock they purchased in good faith; if the licentious man could see the years of agony and degradation, released at last by squalid and ignominious death, which the victims of his passing pleasure must drag out in consequence of what he and men like him have made of them; if the inconsiderate husband, the merciless employer, the glib scandalmonger, the corrupt legislator, the reckless speculator, could be made to see just what their conduct means in want and woe and lingering pain and

premature death to their innocent and helpless victims, they would speedily repent and mend their ways.

The problem of religion is to present Christ as the representative of all humanity; so to hold up the cross of Christ as to make every man who is doing wrong feel that he is rolling up the mighty mass of misery which Christ and humanity must bear. It must show that every deed of dishonesty or lust, every word of unkindness or insincerity, every indulgence in sensuality or selfishness, is an addition to the burden Christ came to bear; a crucifying of him afresh in the person of his brethren. It must point out the countless concrete conditions, in home and school, in business and society, in politics and philanthropy, in charity and reform, in which, by work that scorns to shirk because unwatched, by kindliness that expects no personal return, by truth that shrinks not from inevitable mis-

interpretation, by fidelity that gets no appreciation, by perseverance that receives no encouragement, by courage that wins no recognition, by endurance that attracts no notice, by sacrifice the very existence of which is unsuspected, by suffering that remains a sacred secret locked forever in the silent sufferer's heart, we all may bear our little fraction of the great cross of Christ, which is the naturally selected, divinely appointed method of the salvation of the world.

The old doctrine of the solidarity of man in sin, through inheritance from Adam, has lost for the modern mind whatever force it ever had. If that were the only alternative, individualism of the Stoic type, both in sin and salvation, would come in to take its place. Salvation in and through Christ would have no place in such individualism.

But, as Dr. S. M. Crothers has recently pointed out, we are confronted to-day by a new solidarity in sin, which requires a so-

cial rather than an individual redemption. A vast mass of disease, accident, wrong, suffering, which we used to cast on Providence, we now have learned, through physical, medical, and social science, to be preventable. Typhoid fever and tuberculosis, child-labor and the sweat-shop, certain types of poverty and crime, are absolutely preventable by proper sanitary, social, political, and moral measures. In so far, then, as these avoidable evils persist, they do so with our common consent; and for them we are unitedly responsible. The individual alone does not produce them, but we all are jointly responsible for them. The individual alone cannot remove them, but is helpless and impotent in the face of these gigantic evils, responsibility for the continued existence of which he shares. His only escape from this mountainous burden of social sin lies in giving himself, mind and heart, soul and body, time and strength, influence and

money, to a great social force which on a scale commensurate with these evils is working for their removal.

Now that great social force is Christ, and the spirit of Christ in the hearts of his followers and in the life and work of the Christian community. In his name the great spiritual forces of the modern world are marshaled against evil. In his spirit the fight against these evils is carried on.

Henceforth, to be an indifferent individual is impossible. Each man, whether he wills it or not, must be on one side or the other of these vast historic, social forces, greater than himself. Each one of us must be bearing either an unrepented and therefore unforgiven share of responsibility for the avoidable evils under which the world is groaning and travailing in pain, or else a generous share in the effort to conquer them and save the world from them, of which Christ is the historic leader, and his

cross the accepted social symbol. Each one of us must be either a betrayer or a servant of humanity, a crucifier of the Lord, or else a bearer of his cross. So mighty are these two opposed social forces, that each individual is bound to be swept along by the one or the other. Between them the liberty of indifference is impossible. To choose which one we will serve is our only liberty. Only as we bear the cross of Christ in forgiving, serving, saving love to the sinning, suffering world, can we escape the condemnation of being guilty partners in the sins and sorrows under which it suffers.

V

THE UNFORGIVABLE SIN

ORDINARY sins, such as we have been considering, are compounded of some little selfish good for the sake of which they are committed, and great personal or social evils in spite of which they are committed. In all these sins, the mind is more or less blind; the will is choosing the lesser in preference to the greater good, and is therefore perverse; but the heart is not necessarily bent on evil for the sake of evil; it is not irreconcilably arrayed against what it knows and feels to be good.

Consequently, when a friendly person comes close to the sinner, shows him kindly and modestly the evil of his way, and that, in spite of the evil he does, he is still loved for the man that he is capable of

being, sinners whose sin is of this thoughtless, naturally selfish type, usually welcome the love that comes to them in expressed or implied reproof, tempered with gentleness and kindliness; give up the sins that grieve the friend who loves them; and for his sake, and to stand well with him, try to make their own the conduct and character which they admire in their friend, and which they must have in themselves to please him, and be worthy of his unqualified approval. Ninety-nine sinners out of a hundred will abandon any sin that they are clearly and intensely made to feel is a source of grief to some one who loves them, and whose love they appreciate and desire to retain. So potent a redeeming and regenerating power is love, brought close home to the heart and everyday life of the offender, by one whose love the offender appreciates and is eager to retain! Most men and women in their inmost hearts prize such

love, kindliness, good opinion, and good-will, offered by persons whom they respect and admire, as the supremely precious thing in life. For the sake of that, they will give up everything else, even their cherished sins, their favorite vices, their habitual shortcomings. The love that works this miracle, to be sure, must come close; it must be simple and genuine, without assumption of superiority or airs; it must be backed by a character that commands respect and admiration on other grounds than that of the particular moral issue at stake.

If this truth were the whole truth, we could take a very rosy and optimistic view of the speedy regeneration of mankind, and the completed redemption of the world. Unfortunately, comparatively few wrongdoers ever have a forgiving, redeeming, transforming love, of the intensity and intimacy described above, brought close home to them in human terms. The harvest of

men ready to be transformed by the touch of such a love is plenteous; but labourers in that harvest, persons who live high up with God and his ideals, and at the same time sympathetically and intimately with those who fall short of them, are lamentably few. Not one wrong-doer in ten, even in a nominally Christian land, ever feels the strain between his sin and a loving heart by his side that hates it. Hence so few are drawn away from the sins that so easily beset them.

The difficulty largest in size is our lack of redeemers. But the difficulty deepest in nature is that there are apparently persons who refuse to be redeemed. There are persons, apparently, who not merely sin in the ordinary way, by preferring their own petty satisfactions to larger personal and social goods; but who, when the nobler life of unselfishness is brought close home to them in the person of one who loves them, and

offers them his love, who sorrows for them and suffers with them, who is eager to share the better life with them, and who commends the better life, by the brave, patient, generous way he lives it, — there apparently are persons who despise love itself, turn from it, trample on it, pervert the charity it offers into an excuse for continued wickedness, impose on the offered sympathy, and even hate the one who offers his love, for the implied or expressed rebuke his better life brings home to them.

Such swinish trampling on the pearls of proffered affection, such shutting of the heart against the best love that human hearts can bring, such perversion of offered forgiveness into a renewed license to sin, such contempt for the holiest gift of God through human agency, is the unforgivable sin. It is unforgivable, not because God, or Christ, or the men who have caught the Christlike spirit, do not stand ready to for-

give; but rather because the hardened heart refuses to let the offered forgiveness enter, and shuts its door upon the love that knocks and waits without.

Whether such an attitude can be permanently maintained; whether a soul can forever go on hardening, and feeding on hate; or whether at last even a Guido must cry out to his Pompilia in entreaty (though even then it is a question whether the scared selfishness that merely wants to escape outward penalty has any capacity to appreciate and admit the love it blindly reaches out for in its cowardly fright), is a problem it is not necessary here to raise. The tragic fact is, that sometimes unprincipled men and heartless women do take that attitude, and so make forgiveness, and the regeneration forgiveness works, impossible. From such persons, while we must ever be as ready to forgive and love as God is to send his sun and rain upon

them, we must withhold our pearls so long as they would be trampled on; we must let social condemnation, and civil law, and nature's inexorable retributions, do their purging, and it may be their destroying, work.

VI

PUNISHMENT AS A FAVOR

WHAT has been said thus far doubtless has seemed to many readers as weak, indulgent, soft-hearted, lacking in virility and force. So it would be if it were the whole story; but it is only half the truth. It is to be sure the central half. "The heart of the Eternal is most wonderfully kind." Tenderness and forgiveness are initial and fundamental; not afterthoughts, or the result of special arrangements.

Furthermore, hitherto we have assumed in all cases except that of the unforgivable sin, that when the meanness of his sin is brought home to the offender by one who loves him in spite of it, he is sorry and repents. In all such cases forgiveness is full, free, and instantaneous. God would not be

God, but a devil; the Christian man would not be a Christian, but worse than a heathen, were he to withhold forgiveness for an instant from an offender who is truly penitent.

Still there remain the great majority of cases, where forgiving love fails to reach the offender, and make itself felt, and transform him. In the complexity of life, in the chasms between different classes, in the remoteness of the offense from the one who suffers for it, and in the scarcity of persons who are able to manifest forgiving love in its beauty and transforming power, there are bound to be a great many offenders who do not keenly feel the shame of their offense, and consequently are not disposed to stop it, and turn from it. What is the will of God, what is the right attitude of the Christian man, toward these offenders?

It is punishment; and that as a double favor: a protection to society, and an incipient remedy for the offender.

PUNISHMENT AS A FAVOR

If the title of this chapter strikes us as strange and paradoxical, it is a sad commentary on the crudeness and brutality of our current Christianity. For the truth contained in it is centuries older than Christianity. The mystic poet of Persia asked of God the irrefutable question: "If because I do evil, Thou punishest me by evil, what is the difference between Thee and me?" It was a commonplace with Plato, and comes out in the "Apology," in the "Republic," and as the inevitable conclusion of a protracted argument in the "Gorgias." Socrates's last request of his judges was that they would do him the favor to punish his sons whenever they might deserve it. "Still I have a favor to ask. When my sons are grown up, I would ask you, O my friends, to punish them; and I would have you trouble them, as I have troubled you, if they seem to care about riches, or anything, more than about virtue; or if they pretend

to be something when they are really nothing, — then reprove them, as I have reproved you, for not caring about that for which they ought to care, and thinking that they are something when they are really nothing. And if you do this, I and my sons will have received justice at your hands."

Plato compares a man who contrives to escape punishment to a man who has a bodily disease and contrives to escape the treatment of the physician. At the conclusion of the argument in the "Gorgias," he represents Socrates as saying: "I maintain that he who has done wrong and has not been punished, is and ought to be the most miserable of all men; and that the doer of wrong is more miserable than the sufferer; and he who escapes punishment more miserable than he who suffers."

Of course, in different terms, in the parable of the Prodigal Son, in the treatment

of the woman taken in adultery, in the teaching that the Father sends sun and rain on the good and on the evil, and in the doctrine of "free grace," all this is taught most clearly and convincingly in the New Testament. But, unfortunately, other elements, survivals from the cruder Judaism that preceded it, are mingled with it; and the Christian Church, in its theological constructions, has usually manifested a greater affinity for the Jewish and Pagan survivals in the New Testament, than for the distinctively Christian contribution. The result has been that Christian theology has fallen far below the teaching of Omar Khayyám and Plato. Vengeance has held the foreground; and forgiveness, or "pardon" has been brought in by a special forensic scheme. The result has been a reversion to practical paganism, tinged, however, in spite of its sacrificial and forensic terminology, with a few faint traces

of the distinctive Christian attitude. Thus forgiveness, instead of being central, has become peripheral; and punishment, instead of being recognized as a favor granted by God, and by all right-minded men, to society as a protection, and to the offender as an aid to a just appreciation of his sin, has been regarded as an evil, inflicted in malignity.

What is God's will? What should the Christian man do? Let us take a concrete case. I have worked hard for a lifetime, and as a provision for myself and my family in old age have my entire savings deposited temporarily in a bank. An officer in that bank borrows that money illegally, speculates with it, and is unable to replace it. I find it out. Ought I as a Christian man to cover up his wrong-doing, give him a check for the amount, receiving nothing in return but his promise to pay what little he can from time to time as his salary will allow?

Would that be Christian love? Certainly not, if he had not repented. Certainly not, if he is simply sorry for the plight he is in, and desirous of escaping disgrace and imprisonment. In that case, it will be the truer kindness to him to expose him, and let him take his punishment;—disgrace to himself and humiliation to his family and friends. That experience of punishment will reveal to him the intrinsic hatefulness of his deed, as mere smoothing it over never would. At the same time it protects others from being sacrificed, as I have been, to his gambling and stealing propensities. Punishment, hard as it is, is the real kindness to him, and to society.

Every judge of a court, every head of a school or college, every parent, every person who lives in close and vital contact with persons who do wrong, knows that the severest punishment may be inflicted, not only without the slightest trace of vindic-

tiveness or malice, but with sorrow and compassion for the pain of the person punished. Unless we bear in our own hearts the penalty of another's wrong-doing we cannot, as Christians, inflict the penalty on him.

In the case cited above, what ought we to do if thoroughly convinced that the speculating bank officer is not merely sorry for the plight he is in, and the punishment it promises to bring upon him, but is sincerely sorry for the harm he has done me, so profoundly penitent that nothing would ever induce him to be guilty of such a wrong deed again, and earnestly desirous of doing everything in his power to make reparation? Ought I then to expose him, and bring him to punishment and his family to shame and sorrow? No. In that case the Christian will forgive, and bear in silence the painful consequences of the evil deed. Harm has been done, irreparable harm, but no good would come of expos-

ing and punishing a man who already is suffering sorrow and remorse for the wrong that he has done, and is doing all in his power, however little that may be, to make amends.

If this seems too good to be true, too hard for human nature, the only answer is that all of us who try to carry the Christian spirit into life, all of us who live at points where the real forces of society come into collision, know many persons who invariably forgive; who do it in this vital, costly, sacrificial way; in the way Christ did it, and taught his followers to do it. Out of many such persons whom I have known, I will cite one, who illustrates both the favor of punishment to the unrepenting, and forgiveness to the truly penitent.

He was a Roman Catholic saint, to whom in student days I used to go quite regularly, as often as I felt the need of a spiritual bath. He lived the life of a mediæval

mystic, though he had been in early life the leading physician of the orthodox town of Andover, Massachusetts. I remember well his reproof when one Monday evening, I came to him, thoroughly exhausted after a foolishly ambitious effort to be eloquent as a preacher the day before. "Do you know what you are like?" he said as soon as I entered. "You are like a pipe closed toward the reservoir and open toward the outlet." Once, when an able-bodied beggar came to his door asking for bread, he gave him such a merciless scolding as I never heard before or since; and, as the beggar turned away in shame and confusion, the old saint remarked to me in the quietest, gentlest tones, "That was the kindest thing I could say to the poor fellow. I hope it will do him the good I meant."

One night his son, a dissipated young man, was brought home dead, having been

taken from the railroad track where apparently he had been killed by a locomotive. The father, in examining the body, noticed marks of hands upon the throat, and concluded that he had been strangled in a fight, and that afterwards his body had been placed on the track to conceal the crime under the appearance of accident. He said nothing; but, when he met the guilty man, looked at him, and through him. A few days later the murderer came to his house to confess. The father of the murdered young man said, "You need not confess. I know." The murderer then asked him, "What are you going to do about it?" The father replied, "I shall do nothing. I have simply one request to make of you. Promise that you will repeat from your heart the Lord's Prayer every day of your life." The man promised and went away; a changed, because a forgiven, man.

These two sides — stern exposure of the

sin and relentless punishment of the sinner so long as he still clings to the sin, and forgiveness until seventy times seven for the man who is truly penitent and genuinely responsive — these two sides of the divine and Christian attitude toward sin are inseparable. Forgiveness that is too blind to loathe the sin, or too cowardly to condemn it, or too weak to punish it, is mere milk-and-water sentimentality, a wretched counterfeit of Christianity. On the other hand, punishment that is not a sincere sorrow to him who inflicts it; punishment which is not inflicted as a regretful second best because the offender would misinterpret the forgiveness which we yearn to offer, but in his unrepentant state cannot rightly grant; punishment that is not directed toward society's and the offender's good, is brutal, cruel, heathenish; unworthy of any man who calls himself a Christian.

PUNISHMENT AS A FAVOR

Punishment sorrowfully but sternly inflicted, and forgiveness sacrificially but lovingly bestowed, are different expressions of the same love to the offender; and whether this love shall express itself in one way or the other, depends on whether the offender is still clinging to his offense, and needs to be shocked and shaken out of it, or whether he has already seen the evil of it, is sincerely ashamed of it, and sorry for it.

In practical life this is often very hard to determine. It is the most difficult decision the parent, the teacher, the executive officer ever has to make. Tears, entreaties, and protestations of reform are no reliable indication. They are quite as likely to express selfish sorrow over exposure and impending pain, as unselfish sorrow for sin and the harm to others it has wrought. With the best intentions we shall sometimes make mistakes. Nothing less than

omniscient insight into the offender's heart could tell us infallibly when to punish and when to forgive. Anger is always blinding; and unless we can punish without wrath, we should never punish at all. On the other hand, love is wonderfully illuminating. Sympathy is interpretative. If we are actuated sincerely and solely by regard for the good of the offender and of society, we shall not often go far astray, nor ever beyond the power to confess and correct whatever mistakes we make.

The difference between the new and the old theology, in other words the difference between Christianity as Jesus exemplified and taught it, and heathenism as theologians have imported it into Christianity and given it an elaborate Christian nomenclature, is simply the difference between presenting vengeance as the fundamental divine, and therefore normal human impulse, with pardon as a secondary consideration

introduced by special arrangement; and presenting forgiveness as the fundamental divine, and therefore normal human attitude, with punishment a sorry substitute, to be regretfully applied whenever the offender's condition renders forgiveness inapplicable.

Both types of theology, both Christianity and heathenism, hate sin; but in heathenism, and in the old theology which retains such large elements of heathenism, the hatred of sin is primary and the love of the sinner is secondary. In Christianity, and in the new theology as its more adequate representative, the love of man as man, whether saint or sinner, is primary, and the punishment of the sinner is secondary; a derivative from society's need of protection, and the hardness of the offender's heart.

Both views are earnest and honest efforts to drive sin out of the world, and bring in

the kingdom of heaven. It may be that the alloy of heathenism has hardened Christianity at times into a more effective weapon for dealing with rough men in crude conditions. There may be classes and races of men where this alloy has still important work to do. It certainly is a far better agency than a pseudo-Christianity which has grasped only the half-truth of forgiveness, without its complementary half-truth that punishment must be severe and unflinching so long as the offender remains impenitent.

Still, "Love is the strong thing," and with its two-edged sword of eternal punishment for sin as long as the sinner clings to it, and instantaneous and infinite forgiveness, until seventy times seven, for whomsoever penitence has separated from his sin, love can be trusted in its purity and power to work even better and more durably than any of its traditional alloys.

VII

THE AGENT OF FORGIVENESS

THE preceding study of typical forms of both external and internal sin has made increasingly clear the common characteristic of forgiveness, whatever may be the specific sin it meets. Forgiveness is kindness toward a person who has been doing something which we abhor. It is personal goodwill shining through intense disapproval. It is close and friendly contact with a person whose act and attitude we shrink from and antagonize. It is not natural, and therefore rare. When it occurs it is supernatural and indicates the presence in the heart of him who forgives of something superhuman, divine. That something, of course, is love: love in its most costly, sacrificial form.

Who is the agent of forgiveness? In the deepest sense, of course, God, and God alone, can forgive sins. That, however, is only another way of saying what was said above, that forgiveness is an act of supernatural, divine love. For God is love; and whatever can be done only in love, is done in God and through God.

In another sense, equally profound, Christ is the one through whom all sins are forgiven. For Christ is the historic representative, accepted as such by an ever increasing proportion of the race, of that self-sacrificing, outgoing love which holds dear and sacred every human soul, however depraved. Since Christ means that, and without that forgiveness is impossible, we rightly regard him as the Forgiver and Saviour of all who have sinned. There is no other door into the sheepfold. Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

All this, however, may be accepted either in a dry, dead, traditional sense, or in a fresh, vital, world-conquering sense. Of late the world, and the church with it for the most part, has accepted it in the dry, dead, unfruitful sense. The church that takes it in this sense is doomed. The preachers that preach it are offering their diminishing congregations a gospel of mere words.

If we are to save the world, we must not merely report God's forgiveness, not merely preach Christ's sacrificial love; we must act it out, we must be the agents of it. Apart from its human manifestation in the Son, the Father's love would never have become a potent force in the world. Apart from the reproduction of Christ's forgiveness in the life and attitude of his followers, the world to-day will get no more of Christ's forgiveness than if he had never lived. Some one, who has the love

of Christ for men in his heart, must come close to the individual sinner, touch him at the sensitive point of his particular sin with mingled kindness for him and condemnation of the sin, and win him to a life in which he shall share with the one who forgives him, and with Christ and the Father, the condemnation which love passes on his repented sin. Preaching of Christ, when backed by a congregation who are practicing his forgiveness, preaching of Christ to sinners who know in their own experience what it is to receive genuine human forgiveness from another, or better still, who know what it is to give it to another, is indeed powerful to save. But what saves is not the mere report, nor yet the far-off historic fact reported, but the reported fact interpreted by some human friend in whom it lives and loves anew. Ecclesiasticism is like an army of generals, who plan campaigns and give

orders which nobody executes and obeys. Like the soldiers in battle it is the laymen, or the clergy as pastors doing essentially laymen's hand-to-hand personal work, who bring forgiveness home to the heart of the sinner, and so save souls.

In saying this, it is not meant to deny that the preacher, and even the priest, has an important function to perform. The fundamental work, the actual transmission of forgiveness from God through one soul to another, is a personal, hand-to-hand, heart-to-heart relation, of which no rites, ceremonies, preachments, or proclamations can ever take the place.

Preacher and priest are secondary and subordinate: ministers and servants, as Jesus ordained them to be. Laymen, and ministers acting as laymen, that is as individual men in personal relations with other individual men, do the real work. Yet in keeping laymen up to their Christian privilege,

in holding before them Christ as the great historic leader, and God as the infinite love, the preacher performs a valuable work. The more its subordinate and serviceable character is recognized, the more important does it become.

The actual agents of God's forgiveness are individual Christian men and women. The real church is the company of those who have God's forgiving love in their hearts, and bestow it on their fellow men. Wherever one such soul forgives and loves another, however unworthy that other be, there the kingdom of God comes and spreads. Whoever forgives others has the indispensable experience within him by which to interpret the reported and transmitted forgiveness of God in Jesus Christ. To those who lack that experience in themselves, or lack some human friend to act as its interpreter to them, forgiveness, however eloquently reported in book or ser-

mon, remains a sealed message, an untranslated and untranslatable cipher.

If this sounds strange and startling to our modern ears, it is simply an indication that, when stated in other than traditional terms, the doctrine of the Holy Spirit is something we have never so much as heard of, and in which we have no vital faith. For that doctrine is simply the truth set forth above, that God does his forgiving, saving, regenerating work through the touch of a heart that has his love on the life of another who needs it.

VIII

THE POWER TO BIND AND LOOSE

THE best test of the position taken in this book is its interpretation of the words in which Jesus, discussing with his disciples this subject of Sin and its Forgiveness, conferred the power to bind and loose. "Verily I say unto you, What things soever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and what things soever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."

There are three possible interpretations of these words. First, the interpretation of traditional ecclesiasticism. According to this view, heaven and earth are distinct places, to be occupied by the individual soul only at separate times. God is in heaven in a sense in which He is not on the earth. There He has certain terms, which to our

limited understanding must appear as more or less arbitrary, on which in his discretion He forgives those whom He sees fit to forgive.

At a certain time God sent his Son into the world, announcing his advent by signs and wonders intended to accredit the messenger and attest the message. His Son was authorized to forgive sinners who conform to the terms revealed.

Before leaving the world, Jesus transmitted this miraculously attested power to his Apostles, and they in turn have transmitted it to their successors, who have the power to pronounce a forgiveness here which assures absolution hereafter, and, on the other hand, to pronounce an anathema here which will exclude from blessedness hereafter.

It is needless to criticise this view. The modern world, at least the intelligent and thoughtful portion, has outgrown it,

and the conceptions on which it rests. Other things being equal, the thoughtful modern man would not give the snap of his fingers for the difference between ecclesiastical forgiveness of this traditional sort and ecclesiastical condemnation. We pay no more attention to it than the practical farmer would pay to agricultural suggestions purporting to be based on the results of experiments conducted at some experiment station on the planet Mars. For the hard and fast distinctions between earth and heaven, present and future, natural and supernatural, priest and layman, God and man, have completely broken down.

The second view, widely though not consciously held by most Protestant sects, is that Jesus did not mean much of anything in particular by this power to bind and loose. To the sinner it practically says, "God is gracious; go to Him alone in prayer; confess your sins and ask his for-

giveness, and He will forgive you." If you ask for assurance, you will be referred to the Bible, and the written promises contained in specific verses, as final and sufficient authority. All human mediation between the sinner on the one hand and God and his promises in the Bible on the other is dispensed with, save in so far as the preacher, supported by the congregation, proclaims the grace of God, and announces his promised forgiveness.

This view, by reducing the function of the church to that of a mere preaching station, and sending the repentant sinner straight to God, and Christ, and the Bible, for forgiveness, relieves the Christian man and the Christian community of that close personal contact, illuminated by the insight of love, which makes forgiveness a personal, social relationship. The power to bind and loose, on this view, is an utterly unintelligible mystery. There is no place what-

ever for it. No practical meaning can be attached to it. The preacher is a mere reporter of a forgiveness which is offered in the Bible, and is bestowed directly from God upon the individual, without human and social expression.

What wonder that, wherever this view is held, the church is a declining power, a waning influence! A church that has been reduced to a mere preaching station, a repository of traditions, a performer of rites and ceremonies, is not far from its inevitable extinction. The practical logic of this view is that because God forgives sin, and Christ came once for all to reveal the terms of that forgiveness, therefore all that is left is for preachers to preach, and laymen to hear, the forgiveness of God as it was revealed in Christ. In so far as that logic is accepted, the minister is a mere reporter, and the laity mere listeners. Such forgiveness by hearsay does not work, and was

never intended to work. A church that does nothing but listen to ministers who do nothing but talk is doomed to die of inanition. Important sections of Protestantism are dying that slow and painless death to-day.

If neither ecclesiastical pretensions on the one hand, nor hearsay traditions on the other, carry with them the power to bind and loose, where does that power lie?

Forgiveness is a personal and social relation. It is personal kindness and good-will, shining through intense disapproval of the wrong the forgiven man has done. It involves close and friendly contact with a person whose conduct we shrink from and deplore. It is not natural, and is therefore rare. It is supernatural, and indicates the presence of something superhuman, divine. That something, of course, is love; love in its most costly, sacrificial form.

In the deepest sense God, and God alone, forgives sins. That however is only another

way of saying what was said above, that forgiveness is an act of supernatural, divine love. For God is love; and what can be done only in love is done in God and through God.

In another sense, equally profound, Christ is the one through whom all sins are forgiven. For Christ is the historic representative, accepted as such by an ever increasing proportion of the race, of that self-sacrificing, outgoing love which holds sacred every human soul, however depraved. Since Christ stands for that, and, without that, forgiveness is impossible, we rightly regard Christ as the Saviour of all who have sinned. There is no other door into the sheepfold. Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

All this, however, as we have seen, may be taken in either of two ways that are about equally dead. Those who believe in the mechanical, miraculous commission of

the church to bind and loose, and those who think there is practically nothing for the church to do but listen to a report of what was done long ago, and is laid up in heaven, find a meaning in these texts. In addition to these two views, is there a third view, which takes these truths in a fresh, vital, world-conquering sense, and carries with it the power to bind and loose so really and truly that what the Christian man and the Christian community forgive here and now is forgiven universally and forever, and what they refuse to forgive stands unforgiven always and everywhere?

Yes, there is. According to this view, the view which this book has sought to set forth, while God eternally forgives, and Christ revealed the divine forgiveness once for all, yet it remains for Christian men and women to embody and express, individually, and as a community, this divine-human forgiveness toward every person

who needs it, and is fitted to receive it. Forgiveness is a personal relation, and requires for its full and adequate expression two parties, both human, sharing together the condemnation of whatever has been wrong in either; bearing toward each other mutual respect, and mutual affection. Until God's forgiveness is thus incarnated, until Christ's forgiveness is thus reproduced, in the specific situation where it is needed, toward the particular individual who has done the wrong, it remains something up in the clouds, back in ancient history. It is not a vital, flesh-and-blood reality, doing its redeeming, transforming work in the midst of breathing, erring, repenting men and women, in the homes, and factories, and farms, and stores, and offices of the actual modern world.

If we are to help save the world, we must not merely delegate God's forgiveness to an institution or an order; we must

not merely report it as a fact in eternity, or as an event in past time. We must not merely symbolize Christ's sacrificial love upon the altar, or announce it from the pulpit: we must act it out; we must be the agents of it. For though it is true that one may learn of Christ's forgiveness from sermon or Bible, even then it is experience of forgiveness by a human mother, teacher, or friend, which gives the hearer or reader the power to interpret in real terms the reported or recorded forgiveness of Christ.

Real forgiveness, genuine salvation, requires, as has been said, that some one who has the love of Christ for men in his heart shall come close to the individual who has done wrong, touch him at the sensitive point of his particular wrong-doing with mingled kindness for him and condemnation for his sin, and win him to share with the one who loves him, and with God, their

common condemnation of the wrong which he has done.

Laymen, and pastors doing laymen's personal work with individuals, are the real agents of forgiveness. They actually take the forgiveness of God in Christ, and bestow it upon the man whom, in spite of his shortcomings, they still welcome as a brother and a friend. The community of such laymen, sharing together the loving and forgiving spirit of Christ, and manifesting it toward one another and toward all, is the church. Whoever makes such loving forgiveness the principle and spirit of his life, thereby enters and abides in the kingdom of God, and the body of Christ. Wherever one such soul forgives and loves another who has done wrong, there the kingdom of God comes, there the church of Christ extends and spreads. All who have that experience, whether laymen or clergymen, have the experience where-

with to assure themselves that the reported forgiveness of God in Jesus Christ includes and applies to them; and to all whom, with the insight of love, they lovingly forgive. Loosed from condemnation on earth, they, and all whom they forgive, are loosed in heaven.

Finally, those who deliberately refuse a proffered forgiveness, generously brought, and adequately interpreted in loving human terms, those, in other words, who are guilty of the one unforgivable sin, by their own act bind themselves in a bondage to sin, from which there is no escape. Consequently, when any Christian, clergyman or layman, finds a person in that condition, and therefore finds it impossible to forgive him for a sin to which he clings, and for which he refuses to be forgiven, then and there that Christian man leaves him bound in a bondage which God does not unbind.

In failing to forgive a man in such an

attitude, the Christian man is simply doing what God does. In other words, forgiving love in God and forgiving love in man are essentially the same; and what one cannot consistently and properly do, the other cannot consistently and properly do. Such is the inevitable conclusion of the doctrine that God was incarnate in Christ, and that Christ's attitude toward sin and the sinner is reincarnated in the person of every Christian man, and in the community of Christian men. Such, in other words, is the inevitable conclusion of the doctrine that love in God is of the same nature as love in man, and that God does his saving and regenerating work through the touch of human hearts that have his love on other human hearts that need it.

In the days when these doctrines were clearly grasped and vitally believed, they were called the Divinity of Christ, and the Holy Spirit: and taken together in their

implications and relations constituted the doctrine of the Trinity. If these formulations are held to-day in very loose and precarious fashion, it is simply because we have lost our hold on those spiritual experiences they were formulated to express.

If, then, the power to bind and loose resides in the Christian man and the Christian community, irrespective of any special order or office; if it is a layman's prerogative and a layman's task, what, then, is the prerogative and task of the clergy? How does a clergyman differ from a layman?

Simply in this: that he is set apart to lead his fellow Christians in this common work, much as a standard-bearer is detailed to carry the colors before the regiment. As a standard-bearer, the man who carries the colors does no fighting, though he leads the way and encourages and inspires others to see and do their duty. Precisely so, the minister is detailed to keep

clearly before his eyes and before the eyes of his Christian comrades, to keep warm within his own heart, and in the hearts of his Christian comrades, the spirit of forgiving, sacrificing love; to discover opportunity and need for its practical expression; to mass the forces of righteousness at the points where sin attacks society; and ever to seek to win over to the service and love of the right those who through ignorance, or bad example, or appetite, or passion, have become enlisted for the wrong.

As a pastor, a missionary, a settlement-worker, a teacher, a friend, the Christian minister will have abundant occasion and opportunity to do, like any layman, the actual work of reproving, forgiving, and loving individual men, which is the essential Christian work. Indeed, his relief from the necessity of earning his livelihood in other ways gives him a unique opportunity to do these things. But in all such Christian ser-

vice, he has no authority different from other men, or higher than theirs. He simply has the opportunity to gain and impart the clearer intellectual grasp of spiritual truth and motive, and the leisure to make of them more frequent and constant application. He is the servant of those who serve, the minister of those who minister.

In assigning to the minister this secondary and subordinate function, as Jesus assigned it to his disciples, when he girded himself with a towel and washed their feet, we are not degrading but rather exalting the ministry. For Jesus himself was among men as one who served. The only rank recognized in the kingdom of heaven is gradation of service; and in that gradation, the last to think of himself and his special prerogatives stands first in the estimation of his Lord; the lowest in pretensions is highest in usefulness; the least in desiring to have others look up to him is

greatest in the appreciation with which the Master looks down upon him. To hold the love of the Father in his heart, and the life of the Master before his eyes, with so much learning and devotion that brothers by his side shall catch from him the vision and the fire, and share with him the common task of reproving and condemning the sins that dishonor God, hurt men, and harm society; and at the same time forgiving and loving every brother, however guilty, whom forgiving love can reach and touch and transform and save; — this is the precious privilege, the glorious prerogative of the minister; all the more precious and glorious because of its Christlike character of simple, humble, human serviceableness.

The church and the clergy, therefore, are simply the community of Christian men and women, and its appointed leaders, who are united in a common hatred of all forms of sin, whether in themselves

or others, a common desire to stop the wretchedness that sin entails on its victims, and a common effort to save those who are guilty of it from their meanness and their shame.

The power to bind and loose, accordingly, inheres in every Christian man, and every group of Christian men, in proportion to the intensity of their love, and the insight love imparts. It is simply the power to discriminate between the great mass of sins which are forgivable because men have fallen into them in a passionate pursuit of some petty good, which has blinded their eyes and hardened their hearts so that they do not see clearly and feel intensely the meanness of their deeds and the misery they cause, on the one hand, and the one sin which is unforgivable, because it shuts out the love that would forgive and save, on the other hand.

If most sins, both external and internal,

are wrought in this blind pursuit of petty good, and yet there is one sin a man may commit with eyes wide open to the beauty of the forgiving love he scorns and tramples on, then the power to bind and loose, the power to grant a forgiveness and pass a condemnation which are ratified in heaven, and hold always and everywhere, resides not alone in God, not alone in Christ, not exclusively in the clergy, but in every Christian man who shares with the Father and with Christ their forgiving love and the spiritual insight forgiving love imparts.

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